

Southeast European Studies

RETHINKING SERBIAN-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

FIGURING OUT THE ENEMY

Edited by

Aleksandar Pavlović, Gazela Pudar Draško
and Rigels Halili



Rethinking Serbian-Albanian Relations: Figuring out the Enemy

Identifying and explaining common views, ideas and traditions, this volume challenges the concept of Serbian-Albanian hostility by reinvestigating recent and historical events in the region. The contributors put forward critically oriented initiatives and alternatives to shed light on a range of relations and perspectives.

The central aim of the book is to "figure out" the problematic relations between Serbs and Albanians – that is, to comprehend its origins and the actors involved and to find ways to resolve and deal with this enmity. Treating the hostility as a construct of a long-running discourse about the Serbian or Albanian "Other", scholars and intellectuals from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania examine the origins, channels, agents and mediums of this discourse from the 18th century to the present. Tracing the roots of the two ethnic groups' political divisions, contemporary practices and actions allows the contributors to reconsider mutually held negative perceptions and identify elements of a common, shared history. Examples of past and current cooperation are used to offer a critical analysis of all three societies.

This interdisciplinary publication brings together historiographical, literary, sociological, political, anthropological and philosophical analyses and enquiries and will be of interest to researchers in the fields of sociology, politics, cultural studies, history or anthropology; and to academics working in Slavonic and East European studies.

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Southeast European Studies

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The Balkans are a region of Europe widely associated over the past decades with violence and war. Beyond this violence, the region has experienced rapid change in recent times though, including democratization, economic and social transformation. New scholarship is emerging which seeks to move away from the focus on violence alone to an understanding of the region in a broader context drawing on new empirical research.

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Aleksandar Pavlović,
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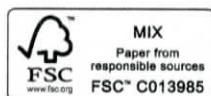
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2 Producing Old Serbia

In the footsteps of travel writers, on the path of folklore

Srđan Atanasovski

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In the period from the middle of the 19th century until the outbreak of the Balkan wars, Serbian intellectuals, chiefly from the Principality (and later the Kingdom) of Serbia, but also from urban centers of the Habsburg Empire, developed a specific discourse of travel writing about Old Serbia.¹ The principal aim of these travelogues was, using history, philology, ethnography and geography, to strengthen Serbian nationalist arguments that these geographic areas belonged to the Serbian nation. Their goal was also to enrich scientific texts through personal testimony of researchers, colorful anecdotes and scenes from everyday life. Such travel writing is thus filled with plethora demographic data, historic information, even ethnographic maps found in annexes, aiming to go beyond objective scientific data in fulfilling the requirements of a literary genre, stirring strong affective reactions in the reading public. Further, from the point of view of artistic contribution, the travelogue served as testimony of the traveler's firsthand experience, a material trace of the writer's physical presence in the space described. It was thus believed that the travel writer's story can only be shared with the public if the voyage described was the result of direct experience.

This chapter provides a brief historic overview of the development of the discourse of travelogue about Old Serbia and a consideration of literary techniques necessary for the travelogues to function as mechanisms of appropriation of territory. Further, it offers a careful look at the political role of such writing on language and folklore of these regions, as well as the scientific texts derived from these travelogues. We can say that the mechanism of discursive appropriation of territory was different for Macedonia and Old Serbia. In the case of Macedonia, the travel writers used descriptions of language, folklore, customs, etc. to claim that the current (Slavic, Christian) population was subject to Bulgarian propaganda that denied them their "natural rights," that is, inclusion in the Serbian nation. In contrast, in Old Serbia, which included Kosovo in its narrow sense, northern Albania and possibly northwestern Macedonia,² regions where the large majority was Albanian, the mechanism of appropriation was supported by historical narrative, geographic and economic arguments, often even with

the fabrication of data, thus opening space for racial and cultural discrimination against non-Slavic peoples.

Although by Vuk Karadžić's time the Kosovo myth had already assumed central place in Serbian culture, art, science and even everyday life (in both the Principality of Serbia itself and in Serbian areas of the Habsburg Empire), prior to the Congress of Berlin, there had been relatively few firsthand descriptions of Old Serbia and Macedonia.³ This can be seen in Karadžić's 1836 text *Serbs, All and Everywhere*, in which he expresses the wish to visit "these southeastern lands of our people" . . . but has "still been unable"⁴.

It was thought that, in the first decades of the 19th century, these portions of the Ottoman Empire were dangerous for exploratory travel and could only be "traversed safely with a strong Turkish escort."⁵ At the same time, travel literature was ever more popular throughout Europe, including various ethnographic studies based on researchers' personal experience. Indeed, travelogues about the Principality of Serbia, but also Montenegro, Herzegovina and Bosnia, filled with the travelers' notes regarding traditional customs, appeared ever more frequently in the press or as books. Improved financial status, concentration of wealth, expansion of the road network, all enabled research and travel as a mode of education and leisure and became ever more widespread among the rising bourgeois class in the Principality of Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁶ This only made the lack of writing about this ever more intriguing region, proclaimed as Old Serbia, all the more conspicuous.

The first recorded travelogue about Old Serbia penned by a Serbian author was published in 1852. Entitled *Dečani's Pathfinder* [*Dečanski prvenac*], it was written by the monk Gedeon Josif Jurišić, born in Irig in 1809, who resided a few years at the monastery Visoki Dečani, from where he toured the surrounding areas (for chronology of major travelogues from Old Serbia see Table 2.1). The majority of Jurišić's text is about the monastery itself, its architecture, the frescoes, as well as the manuscripts and other items from its treasury. In the final portion of the text, Jurišić describes the regions of Kosovo, Metohija, Montenegro and Macedonia which he has visited, often considering them through the prism of medieval history, speaking about the current political situation, emphasizing the precarity of the Serbian population and the uncertain future of the monastery itself.

Calling all these regions Serbian, Jurišić points out that his manuscript came about in response to the desire of educated Serbs in Austria for research and description of these "Serbian regions" and "Serbian antiquities."⁷ The foundations of the travelogue genre about Old Serbia, however, were laid by Miloš S. Milojević, historian, politician and author, who, upon his voyage there, published a three-volume manuscript (1871–1877) and a scientific study on demography, ethnography and geography of the region (1881). As early as 1866, Milojević published a polemic directed against "Bulgarian propaganda" in Old Serbia and Macedonia and began writing a major oeuvre, *Songs and Customs of the Whole Serbian People* [*Pesme i običaji ukupnog naroda srpskog*] (1869–1875).

Milojević was also politically active through institutions such as the Society of St. Sava and undertook the trip through Old Serbia on the written recommendation of the Education Minister of Serbia, Dimitrije Matić and the metropolitan archbishop of Belgrade, Mihailo.

Certain aspects of travel writing found in Milojević's travelogues, and to an extent in Jurišić's, will consistently appear in the publications of later authors: preference for spatial description over temporal; erasure of time as a significant narrative aspect – that is, the introduction of a kind of timelessness of the travel writing genre – the motif of precarity; and finally, the intertwinement of scientific, demographic and historical data with travel prose. Milojević achieves this intertwinement of the scientific approach and a literary text in the very manuscript – such as presenting detailed demographic information within the description of his journey – but also in his overall effort, by shortly thereafter publishing his scientific study as a companion to his travel writing. Following Milojević, this strategy will be employed by several travel writers. Thus, Branislav Nušić published his own scientific study, *Kosovo. A Description of Country and People* [*Kosovo. Opis zemlje i naroda*], only a year after his literary monograph of his Kosovo travels.

A series of important travelogues about Old Serbia was published in the years immediately after the Serbian-Bulgarian war, which further brought the threat of “Bulgarian propaganda” to the fore. Respectable scientists and politicians of the time, Vladimir Karić and Stojan Novaković published “voyage notes” in 1889 and 1892 respectively. Stojan Novaković was known to the Serbian public as a leading historian and linguist, while Vladimir Karić was mostly an ethnographer and geographer. And although the “notes” these two intellectuals published were a relatively small and less significant portion of their overall oeuvre, it is interesting that they confirm the imperative for researchers to also express themselves as travelers-reporters. The study of Spiridon Gopčević in a certain way also testifies to this imperative. Initially published in German, Gopčević's travelogue came out in Serbian in 1890, translated by Milan Kasumović. Intended as two volumes, the first part of Gopčević's text takes the form of a personal detailed description of the journey itself. The second part, entitled “Serbian-Bulgarian Disagreement regarding Macedonia and Old Serbia,” is a political scientific debate directed against Bulgarian “natural” and “historic” rights to these regions, in which the author invokes knowledge of history, linguistics, ethnography and etymology and refers the reader to the first, journey portion for a slew of situations that confirm his positions.⁸

A special place among travel writers who published their works in the first decade of the 20th century is occupied by Branislav Nušić and Ivan Ivanić. In addition to being an author and poet of distinction, Nušić was active in politics. He published two travelogues – *From the Banks of Lake Ohrid* [*S obala Ohridskog jezera*] (1894) and *From Kosovo to the Blue Sea* [*S Kosova na sinje more*] (1902b) – notable in the genre for their excellent literary qualities. Nušić's clever narration enables him to, perhaps more adeptly than other writer, underscore the dimension of space over time and animate the text with dialogue and lyrical reflection. In addition to these two works, in 1902–1903, Nušić published his scientific study, *Kosovo. A Description of Country and People*, which deals mostly

Table 2.1 Chronology of the most significant travelogues from Old Serbia and Macedonia

Year	Title	Genre
1852	Gedeon Josif Jurišić: <i>Dečani's Pathfinder</i>	literary travelogue (including description of monastery)
1871–1877	Miloš S. Milojević: <i>Travelogue through a Portion of Real (Old) Serbia</i> [<i>Putopis dela prave (Stare) Srbije</i>]	literary travelogue (illustrated)
1875–1882	Panta Srečković: <i>Journey Images</i> (<i>Kosovo; Tomb of the Mrnjavčević Family; Podrim and Metohija</i>) [<i>Putničke slike (Kosovo; Familijarna grobnica Mrnjavčevića; Podrim i Metohija)</i>]	literary travelogue
1889	Vladimir Karić: <i>Constantinople, Mount Athos, Thessaloniki. Travel Sketches with Notes about Traditional Customs of the East</i> [<i>Carigrad, Sveta Gora, Solun. Putničke crtice s beleškama o narodnoj propagandi na Istoku</i>]	literary travelogue
1890	Spiridon Gopčević: <i>Old Serbia and Macedonia. My Travel Report</i> [<i>Stara Srbija i Makedonija. Moj putni izveštaj</i>]	ethnographic travelogue
1892	Stojan Novaković: <i>From the Morava to Vardar: 1886. Travel Notes</i> [<i>S Morave na Vardar: 1886. Putne beleške</i>]	literary travelogue
1894	Spira Kalik: <i>From Belgrade to Thessaloniki and Skopje with the Belgrade Singing Society: Traveler's Notes</i> [<i>Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje s Beogradskim pevačkim društvom: putničke beleške</i>]	literary travelogue/report (illustrated)
1894	Branislav Nušić: <i>From the Banks of Lake Ohrid</i> [<i>S obala Ohridskog jezera</i>]	literary travelogue
1895.	Milojko V. Veselinović: <i>A View of Kosovo</i> [<i>Pogled kroz Kosovo</i>]	literary travelogue
1892–1902	Branislav Nušić: <i>From Kosovo to Open Sea</i> [<i>S Kosova na sinje more</i>]	literary travelogue
1903	Ivan Ivanić: <i>In Kosovo: from Šar, through Kosovo, to Zvečan. The Travel Notes of Ivan Ivanić</i> [<i>Na Kosovu: Sa Šara, po Kosovu, na Zvečan. Iz putnih beležaka Ivana Ivanića</i>]	literary travelogue
1906–1908	Ivan Ivanić: <i>Macedonia and Macedonians. Travel Notes</i> [<i>Mačedonija i Mačedonci. Putopisne beleške</i>]	travelogue and demographic, ethnographic and geographic study
1910	Todor P. Stanković: <i>Travel Notes from Old Serbia 1871–1898</i> [<i>Putne beleške po Staroj Srbiji: 1871–1898</i>]	report travelogue

with questions of ethnography. Similarly to Nušić, Ivan Ivanić, a diplomat posted in Pristina, Thessaloniki, Bitola and Istanbul, publishing several travelogues from Macedonia and Old Serbia (1901–1903), as well as a travel-scientific study *Macedonia and Macedonians* [*Mačedonija i Mačedonci*] (1906–1908).

The main task in this analysis of the characteristics of travelogues from Old Serbia and Macedonia is to identify certain mechanisms used by the writers to appropriate these territories. Namely, the authors are attempting to offer their readers a convincing case that these territories are all key portions of an imaginary Serbian national territory. The techniques used to that end are: erasure of time, that is, a narrative that prioritizes the spatial dimension and historical time; erasure or disavowal of political borders; introduction of the motif of precarity; finally, introduction of the documentary method and the intertwinement of travel prose and scientific research, which I will discuss in the final portion of the text.

The primacy of the dimension of space over the dimension of time is one of the main characteristics of all the narratives concerning Old Serbia. The temporal aspect of the narration is already conditioned by the narrator and as such does not represent a significant achievement. Time is substituted by space, which not only guides the curiosity of the narrator but represents the main formative criterion and the way the travelogue strings together the anecdotes, dialogues and travel observations, as well as historical, demographic and other information. In such a way, actual, travel time is blended with historic time, as well as with mythological time, that is, with timelessness. On his way, the travel writer describes the landscapes and locations where he finds himself not only through current observations, but through historical stories and popular beliefs tied to that specific place. A typical sentence, from Panta Srećković, describing his journey through Podrimlje, is: “From Mitrovica to Zvečani, I travel through the village of Pantina, where Stefan Nemanja ‘fought a devil of a fight’ for Prizren.”⁹ Such references, especially in the travelogues of Miloš Milojević, can grow into elaborate digressions in which the author interprets the historical writing carved into ruins and monuments encountered on the way.¹⁰

It is particularly interesting to see the way in which the erasure of the dimension of time is implemented on the level of everyday experience. Thus, in a description of a Turkish inn he encounters in Biljač, Stojan Novaković compares the current guest house with descriptions of travel customs found in Dušan’s Code, noting that “in certain remote areas of Turkey . . . the Middle Ages live on in full bloom.”¹¹ Even in Todor Stanković’s terse prose, the history of the medieval Serbian State is unavoidable, and the author triumphantly concludes that “as far as the villages, hills, rivers and valleys carry Serbian names, as long as Arnaut villages have old churches, monasteries and tombstones, . . . there are no Arbanasi people or Albania.”¹²

Beginning with Jovan Cvijić, the Serbian nationalist discourse includes the idea of an organic, that is, causal connection between natural, geographic characteristics

of “the motherland” and the character and particularity of a nation. In accordance with this understanding of the connection between nature and nation, travel writers from Old Serbia frequently interpret the natural beauty they encounter through the narrative prism of Serbian history, bringing together geographic characteristics with historical narratives. A fantastical poetic image is achieved by Milojko Veselinović, in his 1895 travelogue, *A View of Kosovo*:

In less than an hour the train sped down to Eles-han, and in another hour to Kačanik. Terrifying! It is hard to tell what is more awesome, the Kačanik gorge with her nature or Starina Novak, wearing his headpiece, filled with sorrow and despair, his face glowering! . . . The Kačanik gorge enchants the traveler with its nature. It is not very craggy, rather more forested – a great place for a brigand. Instantly I had before me the old warrior, Starina Novak, it is as if I could see him, flying from hill to hill with his gang, jumping from cover to cover, heroically defending his gorge, pulling the helmet down over his ears! If he was a hero of terrifying gaze, he had reason to be so. Pass there, ye Serb, and if ye not see Starina Novak with his gloomy face and helmet, call me a liar!¹³

In describing Lake Ohrid at the opening of his travelogue, Branislav Nušić develops a more subtle allegory, in which the tempestuous lake becomes a metaphor for the Serbian nation:

How glorious and terrifying this tame lake must look in a tempest! A chained giant, senselessly crashing against the cold cell walls, shattering his shackles, breaking away, making his wardens tremble with his roar. The sky above it writhes, pushing the clouds low, while the lake moves from the deep, reaching high with its enormous waves, the two exchanging heroic howls, entwined in a manly embrace. Does the sky draw its slave to itself in a soothing kiss, or does the slave contort and struggle to smash his fetters and break from the sky’s grasp, to be free at last?¹⁴

The Old Serbia travel writers strive in particular to point to the meaninglessness of the state border that divides the Kingdom of Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, and they do so, first, by pointing to the “invisibility” of the border itself and, second, by showing the affinity of language, customs and circumstances in Old Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbia – despite all the obvious differences. And while the latter required scientific reflection, above all in linguistics and ethnology, the former was conducted through poetic imagery and description, primarily relying on the inspiration and literary gift of the author. In that sense, Novaković’s humorous and lively description of the border crossing with Turkey is notable:

“Where is the border?” I asked my escort. They pointed to a thin, shallow trench.

“That is the border, sir!”

And I beheld closely this line that separates country from country, influence from influence, and a people from itself. Need I say that I wished that my weak eyes could not even behold this narrow line?¹⁵

The third motif, that of *precarity*, pervades travel writing about Old Serbia in a remarkable way, either in the sense of safety of the travel writer himself or a more general precarity, regarding the survival of the entire nation. Indeed, these two levels are constantly entwined and bound up in one unified affect: the travel writer could begin writing about an immediate threat to himself, only to then show how the entire population of the region described is under threat, including the Serbian cultural heritage. Precarity and the feeling of insecurity do not only represent a literary or genre motif, but a technique in which the very act of “reading” the travelogue becomes a highly affective practice. In particular, it is significant how the line between personal security and security of the nation as a whole is elided, thus transferring the feeling of precarity of the nation, via the threat to the writer’s safety, to a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability of the body of the reader – the final consumer. Frequently the entire travelogue is pervaded by a consistent danger to the traveler, bound up with a danger of biological or cultural perishing of the nation. Thus, Gopčević tells us that he has brought with him poison – “a tiny vial of cyanide” – in case he “falls into the hands of Macedonian brigands” who often “use creative torture methods to extort ransom money.”¹⁶ Milojević’s travelogue is most frequently punctuated with scenes describing the danger to his personal security, including a scene in which Albanian highwaymen fire at his party in front of the entrance to a Turkish inn.¹⁷ This personal level of danger is raised onto the level of the whole nation: in Old Serbia, due to the conflict with the Albanian population, Serbs are under existential threat.¹⁸ Descriptions of physical precarity and violence against Serbs appear already in Jurišić¹⁹ and can be followed in nearly all the travelogues from Kosovo. We have descriptions of Serbs, who due to violence and constant pressure from the Ottoman government, renounce their faith and nation, meaning that a significant portion of the Albanian (Arnaut) population is “turkified,” that is, taken by the travel writers to be descendants of Serbs from the middle ages, and in Macedonia, Serbian culture is being erased before aggressive “Bulgarian propaganda” (Gopčević 1890: 7). In his demographic descriptions of given regions in Kosovo (such as the areas surrounding Peć, Pristina and Mitrovica), Miloš Milojević does not even seem to recognize other members of the Islamic faith except for “islamized, turkified Serbs” (Milojević 1871: 214ff). The nation is not only endangered on the level of demographic state, that is, in terms of numbers, but also in terms of noble Serbian racial qualities. Milojević thus adopts the discourse of “impurity” from the travelogues of the Orient and the Balkans, applying it to the “racial other” in relation to the Serbian nation, holding nothing back in an attempt to produce disgust and horror in his future readers:

On the upper floor, they surround the fire, like ravens or vultures around a carcass. One could see the pure islamized Serb, now called Arnaut, the mixed

type of Serbian and Ottoman, Albanian and Ottoman, Albanian and Serbian Ottoman and Gypsy, etc. In other words, in but a few men there were representatives of many peoples, who have, like hungry wolves, torn apart our true and pure Serbian land. The dirty, the pale, the black, the red, innumerable, impure, trash, disgust, the mixture of all malodors into one, the wild gaze, as well as confounded and desperate – all left a terrible impression on us, who reacted with disgust and revulsion, nausea really, if we may speak plainly, more than fear, terror, certainly no good or beautiful. Imagine if you will this mob, perfectly blackened and greasy, who change their clothes no more than once a year, who never comb nor wash, huddled in a sentry post, uncleared since it was built. Only then will you be able to come close to the abhorrence and disgust felt, especially of one who for the first time in life sees such sights.²⁰

On their voyages through Ottoman lands, Serbian travel authors frequently have to admit that they encountered residents of regions of whose nationality they are not completely certain. Gopčević speaks explicitly about the ambivalence he encounters among his interlocutors in Old Serbia and Macedonia, who say that they have become used to speaking of themselves as Bulgarian even though they are really Serbian.²¹ Thus, to Gopčević's question, "then, you are Serbian?" his interlocutor says: "You know, we are Serbs, as it were, but we've grown accustomed to saying that we are Bulgarian . . . this is our custom."²² Jovan Cvijić concluded that in Macedonian Slavs there is no " . . . endogenous national consciousness," and that they "identify equally easily as Serbian or Bulgarian."²³ Personal declaration of national belonging clearly was an insufficient criterion for the purposes of determining the reach of the Serbian nation. The nation was seen more as an objective and natural given, and less a matter of personal choice of the individual, and it was important for the researchers to establish objective and scientific criteria in order to answer these questions. Jovan Cvijić advocated solving the "Macedonian political problem . . . through scientific findings," adding that "there is no doubt that in a fluid mass of people that has neither a definite Serbian, nor Bulgarian national feeling, one can find in both language and historical tradition both Serbian and Bulgarian traits, symbols, traces."²⁴ In the project of scientific determination of national belonging of an undecided population, two fields were of particular value: linguistics and ethnography.

The 19th century saw a widespread and frequent use of the Herderian criterion of national language to distinguish nations in Europe.²⁵ And in the case of the Serbian nation, the criterion of belonging, established as early as the works of Vuk Karadžić, was language. Although this criterion was called into question in Austria-Hungary, where Catholic and Muslim speakers of the shtokavian dialect did not wish to identify as Serbian,²⁶ the criterion was considered entirely valid on the territory of Old Serbia and Macedonia. In these regions, it was necessary to show both that Muslims of the area (Turks, turkified people, but also Albanians – "the

Arnauts") are actually converted Serbs and to draw the border with the competing Bulgarian national project, where there was no religious differentiation. Multiple authors, such as Stojan Novaković and Spiridon Gopčević, attempted to delineate clear scientific-linguistic criteria according to which the language spoken by Macedonian Slavs ought to be considered a dialect of Serbian and not Bulgarian. For Stojan Novaković, one of the basic criteria for differentiation was phonetics, and so this author claims that the presence of the letters, that is, phonemes "d" and "ć" is a reliable sign that the "Macedonian language" is a dialect of Serbian.²⁷ Gopčević's markers of differentiation, on the other hand, encompass phonetic determinants, as well as those of lexicology, grammar, accent, use of pronouns and suffixes and prefixes. Particular emphasis was placed on the idea that the language of Macedonian Slavs was closer to medieval "Serbian," that is, the language researchers encountered on medieval Serbian monuments, rather than contemporary standard Serbian.²⁸

However, this way of using linguistics, as Jovan Cvijić himself noticed, had its drawbacks. First, researchers themselves are often unreliable and recognize only things with which they are familiar, and second, speakers easily shift and adapt their language in accordance with immediate needs and the situation.²⁹ It seemed that ethnography promised a more reliable method, since it was based on studying customs and oral traditions that – it was believed – reached all the way back to mythological, pre-historic time. Indeed, the rise of modern nationalism was based and is inextricably tied to the discipline of ethnography or ethnology. Nationalism was based on ideas of "authenticity," meaning that the study of folklore, for the purposes of uncovering and conservation of forgotten, ancient or endangered layers of culture, presented from the very beginning a powerful tool in the hands of nationalist ideology. Interest in study of "traditional culture" was developed hand in hand with ideas of nationalism: it was the study of folklore that, through discourses of "authenticity," provided the source of scientific argument about natural and historical rights of the nation.³⁰ The understanding of ethnology as inextricable from the idea of the collective and the people, or the nation, was explicitly present in the works of Serbian scientists at the turn of the 20th century: in *On Ethnology* (1906), Tihomir Đorđević expresses the view that "ethnology presents not so much the ideas of the individual, but of peoples, groups" and that "the ethnologist is not interested what the individual thinks is good, true or beautiful, or what the individual believes and desires, but rather, he is interested in what corresponds to the general thought of a people."³¹ The creation of a causal connection between customs and the nation was also significant: in this way, the question of the nation ceased to be a question of willingly belonging and became an issue on the level of daily practice that could be reliably studied and described by ethnology.

The ethnologists and travel writers who researched Old Serbia and Macedonia strove to show that the Slavic population of these regions of the Ottoman Empire had the same customs and corresponding folklore as Serbs in "northern regions," that is, in the Kingdom of Serbia and Austria-Hungary. The most significant indicator of Serbian tradition was the marking of the family saint day. Various authors,

such as Tihomir Đorđević, Spiridon Gopčević and Miloško Veselinović, all agree on this point, describing saint day celebration rituals, comparing them to similar celebrations in Serbia proper.³² Some authors, such as Miloš Milojević and Miloško Veselinović, saw the customs of Old Serbia as part of broader considerations of Serbian tradition. Thus, Milojević, in the first book of his study *Songs and Customs of the Whole Serbian People* [*Pesme i običaji ukupnog naroda srbskog*] transmits songs written down in Old Serbia, complete with commentary about their use in rituals characteristic of Serbian customs.³³ A prominent place in this discourse is occupied by a voluminous study by the Russian consul in Prizren, Ivan Stepanovich Yastrebov, regarding customs and songs of Serbs in and around Prizren, Peć, Debar and the river Ibar.³⁴ Presenting his entire text as “travel notes,” Yastrebov actually offers a specific hybrid of travel prose, ethnographic study and collection of “transcribed” traditional songs.

The study of folklore in the narrow sense of the word – oral tradition, traditional songs, material heritage – required the development of appropriate strategies for an “objective” and scientific way of marking the folklore as Serbian. The collected traditional songs were first analyzed linguistically, to make sure that they were indeed of Serbian and not of the rival, Bulgarian, language. The themes, that is, the analysis of motifs in the poems was equally important, if not even more significant for the determination of national belonging. It was assumed that each nation possessed its own poetic sensibility, according to which the creations of each tradition could be clearly differentiated from that of other nations, thus posing the question of what represents this singular sensibility and how it can be recognized.³⁵ Any mention of a person from Serbian medieval history was proffered as proof of the song’s belonging to the Serbian nation. As the most significant protagonist in this sense, commentators presented Prince Marko.³⁶ Frequently, Yastrebov includes versions of songs already part of Karadžić’s canonical collections and uses comparative analysis of motifs to show that Kosovo is Old Serbia in the poetic sense too, as the territory which gave birth to the poetic core of Serbian traditional poetry, whence it migrated north and northwest.³⁷

Ethnographic researchers emphasized that their discourse on language, folklore and customs is inseparable from the territory this material is supposed to represent, making their ethnographic projects examples *par excellence* of nation mapping. Whether part of travel writing or ethnographic studies, traditional art and customs are always presented geographically, leaving the temporal dimension of the customs’ emergence to exceptional circumstance. These ethnographers and travel writers tended to see the population of a region as very stable, leading them to conclusions about its national belonging, thus at once mapping the “motherland” of a nation. As Holm Sundhausen points out, from its inception, ethnology in Serbia had a “key role in the mental formation of the nation and legitimization of its territorial aspirations.”³⁸ The extent to which the spatial thinking of the nation is inscribed into the very methodology of ethnology can be gleaned from Tihomir Đorđević’s study about the delineation of the discipline, in which the author expresses the opinion that, given that folklore is inseparable from the nation, the ethnographer, who has the task of exploring a people, ought to limit

himself to the “region of that people,” collect data and interpret “what is characteristic for that people, its appearance and forms,” “working on [the folklore] of a limited territory of a single people or a given region.”³⁹ Elsewhere, Đorđević is even more explicit:

Our folklore has for us also *political significance*, since it is a powerful tool for the determination of national borders. It is through folklore that the people draws its own national limits. How could a single object, named with the same word from the Adriatic to the Balkan mountains, from the Aegean to Budapest, signify anything other than that it is indeed the product of the spirit and heritage of a *single people*.⁴⁰

Such use of ethnography was widespread in Europe at the turn of the 20th century, its political role more prominent in border regions where national belonging of a population was not entirely determined. A paradigmatic example is the 1917 study by Leon Dominian about the role of language and custom in establishing borders in Europe. The study even had direct political influence on the proceedings of the Versailles peace negotiations.⁴¹ It was precisely in the context of ethnology as the discipline of nation mapping that one ought to consider the sharp turn of the ethnologist towards the rural, and towards the high value placed on village culture and folklore, which will become a prominent characteristic of the entire nationalist discourse. Urban populations were not only unstable and prone to migrations, but on the territories of Old Serbia and Macedonia, they were in direct conflict with the aspirations of the Serbian intellectual elite, considering that these urban areas were dominated by Ottoman culture. In contrast, it was thought that the rural population was sedentary and that it could thus serve as the “authentic” source of ethnographic material, that is, a repository of timeless oral tradition and the measuring tool for the mapping project.⁴²

Certainly an excellent tool for ethnology as a science of mapping were the “ethnographic maps,” usually included in ethnological studies, but also in travel prose. Ethnographic maps of Old Serbia and Macedonia were in one sense an exceptionally seductive medium of presentation of scientific results and, in another, were frequently entirely and conspicuously arbitrary. Even more than the travelogues, these maps, produced in the international arena, were in open conflict with one another, depending on the (ethno)cartographer’s national allegiance and perspective on the potential solutions to the Eastern, that is, Macedonian question. These maps did not only differ in placement of borders, but which ethnic categories ought to be “delineated.” On the ethnographic map of Miloš Milojević, one can find Serb-Macedonians, Serb-Bulgarians, “Serb-Rašani,”⁴³ *de facto* giving Serbian national space the lion’s share of the Balkan peninsula. On Gopčević’s map, we find “Greeks of Serbian origin,” “Albanians of Serbian origin,” “Serbs of Muslim faith.” Interestingly, at the beginning of the 20th century, Cvijić criticized heavily this practice of ethnographic mapping, saying that “in all ethnographic Bulgarian maps, all Macedonian Slavs are marked as Bulgarians, in Serbian maps as Serbs, and in Greek maps, the same color is used not only for Greeks, but the

majority or even all Macedonian Slavs.”⁴⁴ However, Cvijić himself produced a series of ethnographic maps between 1906 and 1918, sometimes including and at other times excluding “Macedonian Slavs” from the map of the Balkans, in which he kept changing the place of the border between Serbs and Bulgarians and altering the colors on the map in order to present the region of Macedonia as closer to Serbia. The fact that ethnology could not free itself of the need to be expressed in maps (which by their very nature remove the possibility of showing the heterogeneity of cultures of a given geographic region) once again speaks to its basic national and territorial principle of research and the essential national-political connotations from which it was never divorced.

The description of language and folklore was an inseparable part of travel writing from Old Serbia and Macedonia and at the same time one of the more important mechanisms used by travel writers to represent these regions as part of the Serbian homeland. Precisely by describing, collecting, studying the language and folklore, the travel writers could adopt a seemingly objective perspective in order to prove that these regions belong to Serbia, as well as better convey their experiences to the reading public within the Kingdom of Serbia and in Austria-Hungary. After all, their overall conclusions spoke in favor of seeing the language and customs of Serbs in the Kingdom and in the Dual Monarchy, on the one hand, and the population of Old Serbia, on the other, as being essentially the same, without key differences and barriers that would lead to incomprehension between members of these two populations. In accordance with these criteria, this was one people, not only connected by an ethnic origin and racial characteristics, but a unified culture, folklore, language.

It is also important to note that the mechanisms of scientific appropriation of territories were different for the territory designated as Macedonia, where the opposing nation was Bulgaria, from the space called Old Serbia (in the narrower sense of the word), that is, Kosovo and northern Albania, with a majority Albanian population. While in the first case, travel writers and scientists spared no effort in considering current demographic data, as well as linguistic and custom practice, attempting to show that the Macedonian population is closer to the Serbian than to the Bulgarian nation, in the second case, travel writers often ignored reality, using digressions into fields of history, geography or even dubious interpretation of the demographic state. Journeying through Old Serbia, travel writers created a narrative illusion that they are moving through a kind of historical time, with their reflections more often directed at medieval history and the geography of the landscape, rather than the current life of the communities. Finally, when they had to treat the demographic data, travel writers frequently claimed that the population that did not identify as belonging to the Serbian nation, its language and its Orthodox religion, was either recently converted or else had adopted a different language or had emigrated there latterly. This allowed not only for the territories of Old Serbia to be unequivocally marked as Serbian but anticipated the abolishment of political rights and right to self-determination to the entirety of the non-Serbian population, often seen as “unclean,” dangerous, racially and culturally “Other.”

A potential conclusion drawn from this analysis could be that the creation of the myth of Old Serbia required data that was often fabricated or tendentiously interpreted, as well as a discursive context in which these same data could be presented as evidence derived from firsthand experience of the narrator and as incontrovertible truth. Ultimately, the way in which the data about Old Serbia was presented was meant to arouse in the reader affective reactions and engender the identification of the individual with the nation as an imagined community. As such, the discourse of travelogues from Old Serbia became a mechanism of appropriation of territory for the purposes of Serbian nationalism, at the expense of the rights of the actual residents of this region, above all, the Albanian population. This project has had long-term political consequences, given that the views of Serbian intellectuals from the turn of the 20th century are still prevalent in Serbian nationalist discourse and still used to justify nationalist claims. Not only have the texts discussed here gone through new editions and reprints without any adequate critical assessment of context in which they appeared, but there is unfiltered use of pseudoscientific data in contemporary scientific publications (such as reproduction of anachronistic “ethnic maps”).⁴⁵ A critical confrontation and contextualization of these texts reveals, therefore, the extent to which “truths” on which a given nationalist discourse is based have themselves been fabricated in a previous phase of the development of that ideological matrix.

Notes

- 1 The term “Old Serbia,” which hereafter will be used without quotations marks for ease of reading, is not used to denote a real geographic area but is rather a reference to a constructed field of meanings produced in Serbian nationalist discourses during the 19th century that stood for a substantial portion of the imaginary Serbian national territory. Cf. Bogdan Trifunović, *Collective Memory and the Sites of Memory in the Serbian Discourse on Old Serbia*. Doctoral thesis, Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw, 2004), <https://depotuw.ceon.pl/handle/item/1021> (accessed 15 June 2016). Travel writing about Old Serbia written in Serbian has thus far not been treated as a distinct topic. Dušan Bataković edited an anthology about Kosovo from 1852 until 1912, but the primary focus was not travel writing, even though the majority of entries in the anthology were of this type. Dušan T. Bataković, *Savremenici o Kosovu i Metohiji. 1852–1912* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1988). Other studies have taken up specific aspects of Branislav Nušić’s travel writing about Kosovo and Metohija. Slobodanka Petković (ed.), *Knjiga o putopisu* (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2001).
- 2 In drawing lines between these regions, Jovan Cvijić used geographic characteristics, thus putting Skopje in Old Serbia, while Macedonia was reduced to the area around Ohrid and Bitola, a division with which Tihomir Đorđević agreed. Jovan Cvijić, “Geografski položaj i opšte geografske osobine Makedonije i Stare Srbije,” *Srpski književni glasnik* 11 (1904) and Tihomir. R. Đorđević, *Makedonija* (Pančevo: Izdavačka knjižara Napredak, 1920), 4.
- 3 Much like the term Old Serbia, in the writing of these travelers the term Macedonia (which came in two variants: *Mačedonija* and *Makedonija* – with the latter orthography surviving into the present), rather than any actual territory, refers to a web of meanings in Serbian nationalist discourse.
- 4 Vuk S. Karadžić, *Etnografski spisi*, ed. M. S. Filipović (Beograd: Prosveta, 1972), 31.

- 5 Bataković, *Savremenici o Kosovu i Metohiji. 1852–1912*, ix.
- 6 Dubravka Stojanović, "Turizam i konstrukcija socijalnog i nacionalnog identiteta u Srbiji krajem 19. i početkom 20. veka," *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 13 (2007): 41–59.
- 7 Hedeon Iosif Yuryshyc, *Dechansky prvenats. Opysaniye manastyra Dechana, Dyploma kralya Dechanskoh, Opysaniye Ypekske Patriarshiye, mnohy stary zdaniya, mnohy mesta stare Srbiye y Kosovskoh polya* (Novy Sad: Nar. knyhopechatnya Dan. Medakovyca, 1852), iii.
- 8 Contemporary authors have disputed the authenticity of Gopčević's "travelogue," concluding that the author never visited the described areas of the Ottoman Empire. Michael Heim, *Spiridion Gopčević. Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), 90–114. Cf. Christian Promitzer, "Austria and the Balkans: Exploring the Role of Travelogues in the Construction of an Area," in: C. Promitzer, S. Gruber i H. Heppner (eds.), *Southeast European Studies in a Globalizing World* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015), 204–205.
- 9 Panta Srećković, "Putničke slike. Treća slika. Podrim i Metohija," *Letopis Matice srpske* 130 (1982): 12–35.
- 10 See, for example, Miloš S. Milojević, *Putopis dela Prave – Stare – Srbije* (Beograd: Glavna srp. knjižara Jovana D. Lazarevića 1871), 121–123.
- 11 Stojan Novaković, *S Morave na Vardar. Po zidinama Carigrada. Brusa. Putne beleške* (Beograd: Kraljevska srpska državna štamparija, 1894), 17–20.
- 12 Todor P. Stanković, *Putne beleške po Staroj Srbiji 1871–1898* (Beograd: Štamparija Đ. Munca i M. Karića, 1910), 132.
- 13 Miloško Veselinović, *Pogled kroz Kosovo* (Beograd: Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1895), 4.
- 14 Branislav Đ. Nušić, *Kraj obala Ohridskoga jezera. Beleške iz 1892 godine* (Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1894), 65.
- 15 Novaković, *S Morave na Vardar. Po zidinama Carigrada. Brusa. Putne beleške*, 6–7.
- 16 Spiridon Gopčević, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija*, trans. Milan Kasumović (Beograd: Parna štamparija Dim. Dimitrijevića, 1980), 22.
- 17 Milojević, *Putopis dela Prave – Stare – Srbije*, 127–128.
- 18 The intertwinement of the motif of precarity on various levels is also present in the text of Todor Stanković (Stanković, *Putne beleške po Staroj Srbiji 1871–1898*). This author, much like Milojević, includes an episode in which he is shot at (30–31) and punctuates the text with moments about the destruction of Serbian churches and monuments (22, 24), with moments of demographic dissipation of the nation due to violent ejections, resettlement, conversion or rejection of the Serbian language (20), and finally, with constant complaints of daily violence against Serbs (24), achieving a synergy effect in a rambling narrative.
- 19 Cf. Yuryshyc, *Dechansky prvenats*, 122–123.
- 20 Milojević, *Putopis dela Prave – Stare – Srbije*, 103–104.
- 21 Gopčević, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija*, 26–27.
- 22 Ibid., 33. Similarly, Spira Kalik, traveling through Macedonia encounters a boy whom he asks whether he is Serbian, to which the boy answers that he is Bulgarian. Asked how he can be Bulgarian when speaking Serbian, the boy said "That's what I was told by my teacher, that I am Bulgarian, but my daddy says I am Serbian, like him." Spira Kalik, *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje s Beogradskim pevačkim društvom. Putničke beleške* (Beograd: Štamparija P. K. Tanaskovića, 1894), 21.
- 23 Jovan Cvijić, *Promatranja o etnografiji makedonskih Slovena* (Beograd: G. Kon, 1906), 13.
- 24 Ibid., 17.
- 25 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London i New York: Verso, 1991), 67–82; Patrik J. Gari, *Mit o nacijama: srednjovekovno poreklo Evrope* (Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2007), 46–51.

- 26 Karadžić himself said in 1861 stated that if “the Croatian patriots cannot agree on this [linguistic] rationally engendered division, then nothing remains for us than to be differentiated by confession or faith.” Holm Sundhaussen, *Istorijska Srbija od 19. do 21. veka* (Beograd: Clio, 2009), 103–104.
- 27 Stojan Novaković, *Đ i Ć u makedonskim narodnim dijalektima* (Beograd: Kralj. srpska državna štamparija, 1889).
- 28 Gopčević, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija*, 250–257.
- 29 Cvijić thus concludes: “It is still not clear whether what is spoken in Macedonia is a distinct south-Slavic language with multiple dialects, although this is well unbelievable, or whether they are, and to what extent they are, as a whole closer to Bulgarian or Serbian.” Cvijić, *Promatranja o etnografiji makedonskih Slovena*, 18.
- 30 Cf. Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).
- 31 Tihomir R. Đorđević, *O etnologiji* (Beograd: Štamparija Svetozara Nikolića, 1906), 5.
- 32 Đorđević, *Makedonija*, 155; Gopčević, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija*, 259–263.
- 33 Miloš S. Milojević, *Pesme i običaji ukupnog naroda srbskog, Knj. 1, Obredne pesme* (Beograd: Državna štamparija, 1869).
- 34 Ivan S. Yastreybov, *Običaji i pjsni toaryetskih syerbov: v Prizrčnč, Ipyekč, Moravč i Dibrč. Iz poopyevih zapisok* (S.-Pyetyerboorg: Tipografiya V. S. Balashyeva, 1886). Yastreybov’s study was not translated into Serbian; it was written in Russian, whose orthography was at the time closer to Slavonic-Serbian, but it was advertised in the Serbian press, such as the journal *Srpsstvo*, with the title translated. It is thus safe to conclude that it was available and accessible to the reading public in Belgrade.
- 35 Joep Leerssen, “Oral Epic: The Nation Finds a Voice,” in: Timothy Baycroft and David Hopki (eds.), *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
- 36 Gopčević, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija*, 264; Branislav B. Jovanović, “I. S. Jastrebov: skupljač naših najstarijih narodnih pesama na Kosmetu,” *Književni pregled* 3 (2010): 34–36.
- 37 Ibid., 38.
- 38 Зундхаусен, *Istorijska Srbija od 19. do 21. veka*, 209.
- 39 Đorđević, *O etnologiji*, 12.
- 40 Tihomir Đorđević, *Naš narodni život*, ed. Ivan Čolović (Beograd: Prosveta, 1984⁴), 19.
- 41 Leon Dominian, *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1917). Cf. Leerssen, “Oral Epic: The Nation Finds a Voice,” 18–19.
- 42 On the problem of the rural in Đorđević, cf. Ivan Čolović, *Politika simbola: ogledi o političkoj antropologiji* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2000²), 143–155.
- 43 Literally Serbs of Raška, a denomination which makes little sense, as Raška is itself usually considered the cradle of the Serbian medieval state.
- 44 Cvijić, *Promatranja o etnografiji makedonskih Slovena*, 53.
- 45 Cf. Mirčeta Vemić, *Etnička karta dela Stare Srbije. Prema putopisu Miloša Milojevića 1871–1877. god* (Beograd: SANU, Geografski institut Jovan Cvijić, 2005).

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